

## **Testimony to Urge Restoration of Proposed Budget Cuts To Department of Social Services**

### **Teen Pregnancy Prevention**

**February 27, 2015**

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Terese M. Maguire and I am principal of an inner city school whose seventh and eighth grade students participate in the Teen Outreach Program (TOPS). I can personally attest to the amazing service learning projects that my students have developed by working with Ms. Wendel (our TOPs coordinator). Through these projects, my students have learned many valuable life-long skills such as self awareness, interdependence, social action, and empathy. Words cannot properly express how empowered my students feel at the completion of their individual/group service learning projects. The pride that they demonstrate cannot be measured.

Governor Malloy has proposed the total elimination of the DSS Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative, despite our proven successes and implementation of the kind of model our elected officials are looking for. We use only evidence-based models proven to prevent teen pregnancy and the underlying risk factors. After a rigorous credentialing process, CT has been named a Replication Partner with the Wyman Teen Outreach Program network and must be re-credentialed every two years. The facilitators are trained and then observed on a regular basis to ensure model fidelity. We collect data from the students that are analyzed annually by an outside investigator.

The DSS Statewide Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative was endorsed by the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee of the CT General Assembly in 2012. This Committee

concluded that DSS has established a “solid methodology for TPPI funding that should continue to be applied”, and that state contract requirements and outcome measures were met or exceeded consistently.

It is difficult to understand the wisdom in eliminating a high-performing, evidence-based program that the General Assembly itself recognized as meeting and exceeding its projected outcome measures. Dismantling the program’s infrastructure and services now after years of very thoughtfully considered expansion would be detrimental to all of Connecticut’s citizens, considering the high economic and social cost of unplanned pregnancy. The average cost of DSS-funded teen pregnancy prevention services per student is only \$2430. According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, the progress CT has made in reducing teen childbearing saved taxpayers an estimated \$230 million in 2010 alone. Consider, for example, that just 38% of teen girls who have a child before age 18 get a high school diploma, and that daughters of teen mothers are three times more likely to become teen mothers themselves.

I urge you to maintain funding for the teen pregnancy prevention initiative and preserve the uninterrupted delivery of evidence-based services to our most vulnerable youth.

Sincerely,

Terese M. Maguire

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